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Politics in the Postwar American West

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Politics in the Postwar American West, edited by Richard Lowitt. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. x, 400 pp. Maps, notes, index. \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DOROTHY ZEISLER-VRALSTED, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LACROSSE

Richard Lowitt's *Politics in the Postwar American West* includes nineteen assorted essays representing each of the western states, including Alaska and Hawaii. Lowitt's American West begins in the Great Plains, with the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma serving as the eastern border. The articles are wide-ranging, revealing the diversity of the region, particularly after 1945. Despite a geographical unity, the American West is not a monolithic region; for example, while the West Coast is experiencing rapid population growth, many places in the interior are losing residents.

No one theme applies to the entire region, so readers looking for a single theme will be disappointed. There are some recurring themes, however. There are, for example, several contradictions in western political culture, such as the contradiction between a western self-image of a rugged, self-reliant, frontier existence and the federal largesse that is often the mainstay of many state budgets. Still, the commonalities do not provide a coherence in *Politics in the Postwar American West*. In addition, the focus of the articles is uneven; some provide an excellent portrayal of their respective state in a broader national context, while others are narrower studies.

One of the more notable articles is David B. Danbom's "A Part of the Nation and Apart from the Nation: North Dakota Politics Since 1945." Danbom reviews North Dakota's political progression from an isolationist position in the earlier years of the century to its contemporary shift toward mainstream politics. He attributes the change to an influx of federal support beginning with the New Deal. Today, North Dakota receives "two to four dollars from the federal government for every one it sends in" (181). But North Dakota has not been absorbed completely in the mainstream. The economy is still a colonial one, and North Dakotans still "perceive themselves as relatively isolated from the rest of the nation" (184).

Complementing Danbom's essay is Jackson K. Putnam's shrewd analysis of "the rise and fall of liberalism" in California's postwar politics. Chronicling the administrations of several California governors, including those of Earl Warren, Pat Brown, Jerry Brown, and Ronald Reagan, Putnam demonstrates how Republicans such as Warren had a liberal agenda (as seen in his comprehensive health care system), but later lost their association with liberalism to the Demo-

crats. Even Governor Ronald Reagan, despite conservative Republican party rhetoric, was able to move "toward the middle without paying the price" (52). Putnam concludes that liberalism remains a part of California politics because Californians still expect the government to resolve their problems.

While Putnam describes a brand of California politics that often mirrored popular national trends, Stephen Shaw's article, "Harassment, Hate and Human Rights in Idaho," traces the development of a minority white-supremacy group, the Aryan Nation, and the state's efforts to circumscribe its activities. Shaw provides an excellent introduction to the ideology that spawned such militia groups. But despite their message of hate and white supremacy, in the state of Idaho they have had the reverse effect. In response to the presence of the Aryan Nation in northern Idaho, a countermovement encompassing organizations such as the Idaho Human Rights Commission worked for passage of the Malicious Harassment Act in 1983, thereby curtailing the movements of hate groups. Thus Shaw offers convincing proof that militia societies in Idaho prompted a more tolerant attitude throughout the state—discrediting the popular notion that the West offers a haven for hate groups.

Finally, no discussion of the West is complete without reference to its resources—especially water. Lowitt includes three articles on the subject. Peter Iverson examines water use in Arizona from a historical perspective, emphasizing the importance of culture in determining the allocation of resources. He notes that new arrivals to Arizona, ignoring the reality of a scarce resource base, sought to recreate the surroundings they left behind. Today the scarcity of water can no longer be dismissed. Sandra K. Davis approaches water politics in Colorado by examining policy. She concludes that the consensus regarding water use has been eroded by the conflicting claims of urban and rural interests and environmentalists, among others. In their examination of the Kansas Water Act of 1945, James Sherow and Homer E. Socolofsky reiterate many of the same themes, in particular a growing urban water use.

Two other exceptional articles are Jerome E. Edwards's discussion of Nevada's gambling economy and Robert E. Ficken's examination of what the Columbia River project meant to the state of Washington. More than the other articles, these two underscore issues unique to the West, supporting Lowitt's claim that the American West is a "distinctive part of the United States" (x). But in both instances, comparisons can be made with other regions, including the Midwest, where gambling is becoming increasingly popular. States that border the Mississippi River have also long been the recipients of federal dollars

and all that entails. Perhaps the difference between the West and other regions is a matter of scale. Thus, readers might recognize some of the issues westerners have wrestled with and profit from the insights these authors offer.

Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest, by Michael F. Logan. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995. viii, 223 pp. Illustrations, maps, table, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA BURGESS, CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Though in many respects a work of western history, Michael Logan's *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall* has value for those elsewhere. Logan develops his thesis—that opposition to urban growth has been a constant element—in case studies of Tucson, Arizona, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, but there are larger lessons.

After providing some general background, Logan moves to the early twentieth century, when each city developed a "growth is good" mentality. By the end of World War II, a growth machine was firmly entrenched. Boosters and government officials in both cities made deliberate appeals to gain new residents, tourists, and economic development. Success brought both increased population and annexation of the urban fringe. Success also brought opposition. Most apparent initially was political opposition. Some resented planning and zoning controls. Others wanted no city services or taxes. Those in annexed areas feared loss of their rural lifestyle. State laws governing municipal incorporation and annexation guided opposition. A second type of opposition was ethnically based. Largely Hispanic South Tucson successfully resisted annexation by becoming an independent municipality; Albuquerque's Old Town did not. In the 1960s both cities targeted Hispanic barrios for urban renewal because officials feared inner city blight might scare off new residents, tourists, or development opportunities. But residents of the targeted areas resisted. Each city also used elements of its ethnic heritage to attract tourists and economic development while making little genuine effort to understand, respect, or preserve it. Environmental resistance to growth was the last to be voiced explicitly. Both Tucson and Albuquerque promoted their sunny climates and beautiful vistas, but fringe development and auto-induced smog soon hid the views. Water shortages occurred as new residents made the desert green and "foreign" plants brought irritating pollens. Brief chapters at the end of each case study show that the story is not over.

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